Urban Design Element

Introduction

Community character is comprised of the perception and experience of the community by those living, working, and passing through. It is largely determined by the built environment and the surrounding natural environment as affected by urban development. Careful urban design can provide direction and guidance for development to enhance community character by creating a greater sense of time, place, and well being. This Urban Design Element seeks to enhance Fairfield's image as a unique community and to retain that image in attractive and orderly development which preserves the beauty of the natural setting.

This Element is implemented mainly through the Fairfield Urban Design Plan. The Urban Design Plan contains specific design guidelines that expound upon the general objectives and policies contained within this Element. Together, these two documents set standards for the design of site layouts, community plans, single and multiple family residential projects, hillside residences, shopping centers, commercial, office, and industrial developments, landscaping, parking, signs, streetscapes, and the integration of development with the surrounding area.

Goal

The goal of the Urban Design Element is:

Enhance Fairfield's image as a unique community and retain that image in attractive and orderly development which preserves the beauty of the natural setting.

Objectives, Policies and Programs

Objective UD 1
Cultivate distinctiveness so that Fairfield remains unique among San Francisco Bay Area and Central Valley communities.

Policy UD 1.1
Create entryways to the City that achieve a sense of arriving into the City. These entryways shall incorporate signage, landscaping, architectural features, and combinations of land uses that enhance the image of the City. (See Policy CI 2.9)

Program UD 1.1 A
Identify the key entryways to the City, and incorporate guidelines into the Urban Design Plan and Zoning Ordinance for the signage, landscape features, architectural motif and land uses for each entryway.

Policy UD 1.2
Enhance core areas of more intensive and higher image development to function as centers in key areas of the City (i.e. Downtown and the Fairfield Gateway in Central Fairfield, the Fairfield-Vacaville Train Station, and the I-80/I-680 Interchange in Cordelia). (See Policy LU 2.2)

Policy UD 1.3
Connect areas of the city by concerted streetscape development along major arterials and pedestrian pathways.

Policy UD 1.4
Develop positive, high quality edges along Interstate 80, major arterials, and the city limits. (See Policy CI 2.9)

Policy UD 1.5
Continue to support the Art in Public Places Program

Objective UD 2
Promote design that is innovative and varied but unified. (See Objective HO 9)

Policy UD 2.1
New development should be compatible with the City's overall development profile.

Program UD 2.1 A
Include in the Urban Design Plan citywide guidelines for the character of residential, commercial and industrial development.

Policy UD 2.2
Encourage variety in the use of complementary colors, textures, forms, styles, structures, and/or materials.

Policy UD 2.3
Allow the careful use of contrast where it would be appropriate for providing focus and interest to an area.

Policy UD 2.4
Reinforce key patterns that positively characterize an area through the use of common design features.

Objective UD 3
Emphasize Fairfield's small-scale identity.

Policy UD 3.1
Include guidelines in the Urban Design Plan to enhance the City's small-scale identity, such as creation of a sense of neighborhood in residential areas. (See Policy HO 9.2, Objective LU 10, Objective ED 2)

Policy UD 3.2
Promote pedestrian and bicycle orientation through separated sidewalks, bicycle paths, interior walkways, planting of canopy trees adjacent to pedestrian paths, etc. (See Objective CI 9, Policy CI 9.1, Policy CI 9.2, Policy CI 9.5, Policy CI 9.8, Program CI 9.1 A, Program CI 9.2 A, Objective CI 10, Policy CI 10.1, Policy CI 10.2, Policy CI 10.3, Policy CI 10.4, Policy CI 10.5, Policy CI 10.6, and Policy ED 4.3)

Policy UD 3.3
Require new development to respect the scale and character of nearby structures and minimize or mitigate abrupt and excessive differences. (See Policy ED 4.3)

Policy UD 3.4
Encourage private preservation of buildings which have historic significance and/or architectural merit. (See Policy OS 10.1 and OS 10.9)

Objective UD 4
Ensure high standards of quality in development.

Policy UD 4.1
Adhere to the design guidelines of the Fairfield Urban Design Plan.

> *Program UD 4.1 A*
> *Adopt, and regularly update the Fairfield Urban Design Plan.*

> *Program UD 4.1 B*
> *Regularly review and update the design guidelines and manuals that have been prepared for specific areas of the City (i.e., Cordelia Area Design Compatibility Guidelines, Downtown Design Guidelines, Interim Design Manual for the Fairfield Regional Center Project, and the Fairfield Gateway Design Manual).*

Policy UD 4.2
All aspects of development, including, but not limited to, grading, site planning, signage, fencing, landscaping, screening, lighting, color scheme, size, bulk, height, etc., must be integrated and relate to their surroundings in a complementary manner.

Policy UD 4.3
Require the use of water features, sculptures, or other elements to help define the entrance to large projects.

Policy UD 4.4
Encourage rehabilitation or upgrade of aging residential neighborhoods, commercial centers, and industrial areas.

> *Program UD 4.4 A*
> *Adopt design plans and rehabilitation programs for the commercial corridors along Texas Street between Pennsylvania Avenue and the I-80 interchange and along North Texas Street between Union Avenue and Air Base Parkway. Include in the program for North Texas Street, a review of land uses in the vicinity of the Travis Blvd./North Texas intersection, including the former Ellsworth Court Mobile Home Park. (See Program ED 9.1 A)*

Policy UD 4.5
Screen negative views through site planning, architectural, and landscape devices.

Policy UD 4.6
Include regulations in the Urban Design Plan which prevent a cluttered appearance in the front of the buildings.

Policy UD 4.7
Include regulations in the Urban Design Plan to limit excessive repetition of the same residential building elevations within a subdivision.

Objective UD 5
Preserve the natural scenic quality of the surrounding setting. (See Objective OS 6, Policy OS 6.1 and Policy OS 6.5)

Policy UD 5.1
Development should be designed to provide continuity with features of the surrounding area.

Policy UD 5.2
Restrict development from significantly encroaching on public views of ridgelines, agricultural areas, the Cement Hill Range, and the Suisun Marsh. (See Policy OS 6.1)

Policy UD 5.3
Develop hillside areas in a manner which respects their topography and maintains their visual integrity. (See Policies OS 6.1, OS 6.2, and OS 6.3 and Programs OS 6.3 A, OS 6.4 A, and OS 6.4 B)

Objective UD 6
Utilize extensive landscaping to beautify Fairfield's urban areas.

Policy UD 6.1
Preserve existing significant trees and extensively plant new trees where appropriate. (See Policy OS 7.7)

> ***Program UD 6.1 A***
> *Develop a Comprehensive Tree Preservation/Planting Plan for the City incorporating policies for the use of canopy trees for shade, accent trees for color, etc.*

Policy UD 6.2
Landscape materials should consist of drought resistant plant varieties complementary to the area. (See Policy PF 4.8 and Policy OS 8.5)

Policy UD 6.3
Landscaping shall be continuously maintained in good condition in accordance with the City's Property Maintenance Ordinance.

Objective UD 7
Encourage more efficient use of nonresidential land.

Policy UD 7.1
Develop guidelines for new community commercial centers that encourage:

- A minimum FAR of .5;

- 60% of arterial frontage and 100% of street front have building within ten feet of the property line; and

- 20% of the square footage be housing.

Policy UD 7.2
Evaluate the City's current standards for parking and recommend measures to reduce the amount of land area devoted to parking on new projects.

Policy UD 7.3
Encourage shared use of parking facilities and promote planning for land uses that can utilize the same parking area at different times.

Objective 8
Encourage and approve infill development which is compatible with the surrounding area.

Policy UD 8.1
Encourage and facilitate the development of identified vacant, contiguous properties zoned for medium density housing with a prototypical "neo-traditional" type subdivision of single-family detached and attached homes.

Program UD 8.1A
Revise residential street development standards and adopt alternative minor residential standards which allow for a reduced total width of 24 feet, where on-street parking required for a residential project can be provided in 90-degree angle "pods" or other common parking facilities.

Policy UD 8.2
Encourage the use of traffic circles, hardscape treatments at crossroads and other traffic-calming devices in the street layout and land plans for new residential subdivisions, in order to make new neighborhoods more friendly to the pedestrian.

Supporting Text

The Setting

Fairfield's character is distinctly unique from other communities in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Central Sacramento Valley. The Fairfield experience is different even from Vallejo and Vacaville's, though the two cities are in close proximity. It can be said that Fairfield's charm comes from the natural beauty and small town feeling it has managed to maintain even as the City has grown.

The surrounding natural environment is one of the most significant resources available to Fairfield because of the way it defines Fairfield among other communities along the rapidly urbanizing Interstate 80 corridor. The surrounding area includes hills to the north, east, and west sides and the Suisun Marsh to the south. Orchards, vineyards, rangeland, and row crops dot the perimeter of the City providing a rural backdrop to the developing areas.

Development in Fairfield is characterized by a variety of architectural styles and design themes. Overall, development is of small scale and moderate intensity.

Residential development is the predominate land use in Fairfield. Older neighborhoods were generally made up of modest bungalow-style homes of wood/stucco construction. Houses in newer developments tend to be larger and more ornate, utilize a greater variety of construction methods and materials, and incorporate more landscaping. Most of the new residential development is part of comprehensively planned communities incorporating a high level of amenities.

Office, commercial, and industrial development has followed a similar pattern. Recent developments tend toward larger and more innovative designs that incorporate more amenities, unique design features, and extensive landscaping than before.

In large part, Fairfield's move upscale can be attributed to the City's increasing awareness of urban design issues and the growing demand for high-amenity development. In turn, the City's urban design policies have reflected increasingly higher design standards through the years.

Fairfield Urban Design Plan

Fairfield's urban design policies are contained in the following documents:

- <u>Downtown Design Guidelines</u>, September 1983. Contains guidelines addressing design issues specific to the Downtown Fairfield area.

- Cordelia Area Design Compatibility Guidelines, March 1982. Contains guidelines intended to implement the design policies of the Cordelia Area Specific Plan on commercial and industrial development in the Cordelia area.

- Interim Design Manual for the Fairfield Regional Center Project, June 1977. Provides design guidelines for all development within the Fairfield Regional Center Redevelopment Area.

- Fairfield Gateway Design Manual, September 1981. Sets specific design and performance requirements for the Fairfield Gateway portion of the Fairfield Regional Center Redevelopment Area.

The above documents have been incorporated into the Fairfield Urban Design Plan (February 1990), together with the appropriate policies from the City's General Plan. A revised Urban Design Plan is currently in production.

The Urban Design Plan sets design standards for public and private development reflecting Fairfield's desire to achieve high quality in all development. It coalesces public and private development towards common city design goals, defines what each development project must contribute toward this image, and encourages high standards of planning and development.

Thirteen districts are delineated based on a combination of visual, physical, and land use characteristics. Urban design goals and objectives are established for each of the districts. Further, the Plan's design guidelines address site plans, community plans, single and multiple family residential, hillside residential, shopping center, commercial, office, and industrial development, landscaping, parking, signs, and the integration of development with the surrounding areas.

These guidelines expound upon the general objectives and policies contained in the Urban Design Element and are complementary to it.